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RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 2935  
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH 7495  
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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/R/MR:STHIBEAULT AND  
JMCCARTER, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBOURGEOIS, AZAIBACK, AND  
AFERNANDEZ, IIP/G/NEA-SA MDAVIDSON  
WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC  
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SUBJECT: Syria/Turkey, Syria/Iraq, Palestinian Territories, Lebanon  
(2/1)

**¶1.** Summary: Syrian papers on Feb. 1 reported FM Walid Mouallem's visit to Turkey on Jan. 31 and his meetings with President Sezer and PM Erdogan to convey two messages from President Asad on the latest developments in the region. Mouallem also held talks with Turkish FM Abdullah Gul on bilateral relations, the latest developments in the region, particularly in Iraq and Palestine, and the role that Turkey would play in mobilizing efforts to reach a solution leading to stability and security in the region. The two sides reiterated the importance of maintaining Iraq's independence and territorial integrity and stressed the role that Iraq's neighboring countries could play achieving stability and security, pointing to the necessity of ending sedition and realizing national reconciliation among Iraqi factions. They also underlined the necessity of dissolving militias and building an Iraqi army on a national basis, as well setting a timetable for the withdrawal of foreign troops. On the Palestinian issue, Mouallem and Gul expressed support for efforts to stop Palestinian in-fighting and to form a Palestinian national unity government.

On Syrian/Iraqi relations, papers reported Vice President Shara's meeting on Jan. 31 with Sheikh Harith al-Dari, Chairman of the Iraqi Association of Muslim Scholars. Shara reiterated the importance of achieving national reconciliation and of the participation of all Iraqis in the political process. In a statement to reporters after the meeting, Sheikh Al-Dari praised Syria's support of Iraqis who escaped from Iraq after the US occupation. Al-Dari added: "Syria's positions are declared. It rejected the occupation before and after it took place. It is against terrorism, but it does not reject resistance, because resistance is a legitimate right. We appreciated these positions, which placed Syria ahead of others."

Papers also featured a statement by the Transport Ministry on Jan. 31 denying media reports of the suspension of landing rights for Iraqi airplanes in Syrian airports. "The ministry has not made any decision to suspend Iraqi airplanes' landing in Syrian airports; but the procedure comes within an arrangement to organize landing requests and give Syrian Civil Aviation Authorities the appropriate time for arranging landing procedures in Syrian airports," Minister of Transport Yarob Badr told a SANA reporter. The minister clarified that the Iraqi Airlines' Agent in Damascus has undertaken not to send any Iraqi airplane into Syria before obtaining formal permission from the civil aviation authorities. "It is a guarantee

the Iraqi side should be committed to within the framework of the Syrian-Iraqi agreement," he added. Badr pointed out that the Ministry had sent, through the Foreign Ministry, a letter to the Iraqi Embassy in Damascus about what the Syrian and the Iraqi sides have agreed upon.

End of summary.

#### 12. Selected Headlines:

"President Asad sends two messages, to Turkish President Sezer and Prime Minister Erdogan, on the latest developments in the region. Mouallem reviews bilateral relations with Turkish FM Gul. Mouallem and Gul reiterate the importance of maintaining Iraq's unity, building a national army and scheduling US withdrawal from Iraq" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 2/1)

"Vice-President Farouk Shara discusses the latest developments in Iraq with Harith al-Dari, Head of Iraq's Muslim Scholars Association. Shara: Participation of all Iraqis in the political process is the main guarantee of unity and ending foreign presence in Iraq" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 2/1)

"Ministry of Transport: Syrian airports did not suspend landing of Iraqi flights, but the procedure comes within the framework of a Syrian-Iraqi agreement" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 2/1)

"US losses increase in Iraq. Scandals of corruption in Iraq corner US President Bush. Pelosi: The situation is catastrophic in Iraq" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 2/1)

"A new route for the racist wall swallows lands of Ramallah. US security support for Palestinian sedition" (Government-owned Tishreen, 2/1)

"Calm returns to the Gaza Strip. Hamas warns against US aid for the Palestinian President's security" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 2/1)

"Former Lebanese MP Talal Arslan: The Authority's Militias will not prevent the opposition from acting"

#### 13. Editorial Block Quotes:

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"Prejudiced Democracy"

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Khalid al-Ashhab, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Thawrah, wrote (2/1): "Americans came to establish democracy in Iraq but ended up destroying the country and killing hundreds of thousands of Iraqis....

"And here are Americans today continuing their 'jihad' for the sake of democracy in Iraq by finalizing the destruction of the country, killing its people, and dividing it into groups, sects, and ethnicities....

"In Lebanon, Americans mislead the street with a package of conspiracies and lies and a series of programmed political assassinations that began with Rafiq al-Hariri, and they brought their choice to power there, a choice that impoverished people and led Lebanon into the unknown....

"And when the results of Palestinian democracy turned out contrary to their expectations, Americans turned against the Palestinian people and the ballot boxes....

"Now, for Lebanon, American democracy means that Fu'ad al-Saniora should barricade himself in Government House and turn his back on the huge protests in the Lebanese street....

"Even in the United States itself, President Bush does not seem to see the Democratic majority as a genuine democracy...."

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"It Is an Arab Responsibility"

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Umar Jaftali, a commentator in government-owned Tishrin, wrote (2/1): "Statements of denunciation are no longer useful in explaining just causes and points of view. There must be effective Arab action that goes beyond statements of condemnation and denunciation to defend Arab causes in the international arena....

"Why don't Arabs prepare files on Israel's crimes against Palestinians to present to the world? Why don't they raise the issue of Israel's use of uranium-based bombs in Lebanon? Why don't they activate an Arab boycott in Israel?

"There is an urgent need for a real Arab awakening before it is too late...."

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"Will Some Arabs Throw a Lifeline to Israel?  
Arabs at a Strategic Crossroads in the Upcoming  
Arab Summit"

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Dr. Mahdi Dakhlallah, former Minister of Information, commented in government-owned Tishrin on (2/1): "Israel is working to weaken Arabs through its attempt to divert Arabs' attention from the Arab-Israeli conflict to the so-called Iranian nuclear threat....

"While some serious Israeli writers are expressing concern over Israel's fate, some Arabs are searching for an illusionary contradiction in the region, thus throwing a lifeline to Israel....

"The Arab summit in March will be a test for the strategic crossroads that Arabs and the region have reached today. It is perhaps the most important crossroads in contemporary and modern Arab history....

"In all the past stages, there was a strategic accord among all Arabs about opposition to the Zionist plan, regardless of the weak commitment to this accord by some Arab countries and forces.... The Beirut summit underlined this strategic accord on the priority of the Arab-Zionist conflict. What will the next summit say?"

Corbin